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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Golf, Jealousy in World War II

By Drew Pearson

A LOT of people have been asking whether it was true that Gen. Eisenhower was "on the golf links" during crucial periods of the war as charged by British Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, later denied.

[Alanbrooke has explained that his reference was to the fact that at one point Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters were on the golf course at Rheims. His implication, however, was that the Allied commander was not taking an active role in the prosecution of the war.]

The full answer involves some of the secrets of the war which hitherto have leaked out only in dribbles. In fairness to Gen. Eisenhower, the answer must also include the rankling jealousy which the British Imperial Chief of Staff, then Gen. Sir Alanbrooke, together with Field Marshal Montgomery, had for Gen. Eisenhower.

Unquestionably, Gen. Eisenhower did play golf, and the book written by his British chauffeur-secretary, Kay Summersby, "Eisenhower Was My Boss," is full of references to his relaxation. In what is probably the frankest discussion of Gen. Eisenhower during the war, she tells of many bridge parties, golf, relaxation with western pulp magazines, and gives the first public clue of his heart condition.

Referring to his headquarters in England, she wrote: "Happily, the grounds fringed on a golf course. The General had no time for a complete round but was to spend many easeful hours playing the sev-

eral holes nearby. He became an expert on the 18th in particular."

Regarding other relaxing moments in the war, Miss Summersby wrote: "That began a heavy round of bridge. I often played partners with the General: our accounts—at threepence per 100 points—eventually turned into an accountant's nightmare, a financial hodgepodge of dollars, francs and marks."

However, part of his worries and need for relaxation came from bickering within his own Allied Command.

"The General fretted," wrote Miss Summersby, "about difficulties holding up Gen. Bradley's attack and Monty's push . . . The General suffered several bad headaches, complained about his blood pressure and . . . spent one morning in bed."

Alanbrooke's Jealousy

WHAT HAS never been clearly spelled out, and certainly isn't likely to be reported by Lord Alanbrooke, is that Alanbrooke was Winston Churchill's choice to lead the combined United States-British forces.

However, Churchill also saw that American public opinion would never permit a British commander to be in charge of an assault force which was largely American. So at President Roosevelt's urging, Churchill agreed to Gen. George C. Marshall as Allied Commander.

Of all the people Alanbrooke hated, Marshall was first. However, Marshall eliminated himself from the picture. Despite his dream of leading one of the greatest armies in history, he decided

he could do more good by remaining in Washington to direct over-all strategy.

Not knowing that Marshall had taken himself out of the top command, Gen. Eisenhower's chauffeur-secretary, Miss Summersby, had some interesting comments:

"All of us were agreed that the boss (Gen. Eisenhower) should have the Overlord assignment instead of Gen. Marshall, who was better qualified for the role of handling global strategy, Washington politics and top direction of the American Army. Ike would be a misfit in the Pentagon . . . yet the rumor gained strength as unpleasant rumors will . . ."

With Marshall out of the picture, Alanbrooke thought he had the job of top Allied Commander, only to find that Gen. Marshall had recommended his protege, Gen. Eisenhower, and that Churchill had accepted Marshall's advice.

This touched off bickering which few people knew about during the war. Unquestionably it slowed down victory. Alanbrooke and Montgomery were on one side, Gen. Eisenhower on the other.

She also reported that Sir Alanbrooke had conferred with Gen. Bedell Smith, Gen. Eisenhower's chief of staff, to express doubts that Gen. Eisenhower was "strong enough" for his job.

There were other things that happened behind the scenes, however, which neither Miss Summersby nor the British public knew about. Gen. Alanbrooke conceived the idea of promoting Montgomery to the rank of Field Marshal, thus giving Monty one more star than Gen. Eisenhower and making him Gen. Eisenhower's superior.

After Gen. Alanbrooke put this strategy across, the British press started a hue and cry that Monty remain as sole commander of land forces, with Gen. Eisenhower only a "political" general.

Alanbrooke's further strategy was to wait until Gen. Eisenhower had suffered a defeat, then Monty would propose Alanbrooke as the Allied savior and he would step into the job of Supreme Commander at long last.

AT THIS POINT, Washington rushed a promotion to Gen. Eisenhower. It was decided, however, that he could not use the title "Marshal" because Gen. George Marshall, who was also promoted, objected to being called "Marshal Marshall." So the title "General of the Army" was used instead. This brought Gen. Eisenhower up to the same rank as Montgomery, but the jealousy still continued.

Meanwhile, Montgomery had begged down at Caen, near the Normandy beachhead, unwilling or unable to push forward until he was given more American reinforcements. At the same time, Gen. Bradley had pushed the American Army far into France. Many strategists claim that he and Gen. Patton would have ended the war before Christmas, 1944, if Gen. Eisenhower, in deference to Montgomery, had not cut off their gasoline.

Miss Summersby had some revelations on this chapter of Allied jealousy.

"Gen. Eisenhower," she wrote during the American drive through France, "was happy about Patton starting across the Moselle, unhappy because Monty couldn't work up any excitement—without the bribe of complete priority on all supplies . . ."

But, she wrote: "Monty, Britain's most glamorous and successful general, simply couldn't be sacked. His retirement from European action would have kicked up a storm in Britain big enough to smash Allied unity."

Gen. Eisenhower, Miss Summersby noted, "wrote Monty a letter urging all-out offensive . . . by the middle of July Monty's delay in attacks; his excessive caution . . . had many officers against him . . . Gen. Ike went over to France. Returning, he said Monty seemed quite satisfied with his own progress, as though it were up to Bradley to go ahead . . ."

"A week later the General wrote Monty that he just had to get going . . . on Aug. 20, Monty was fearful he had insufficient troops to move into the Pas de Calais area. Three days later he wanted 10 United States divisions to help."